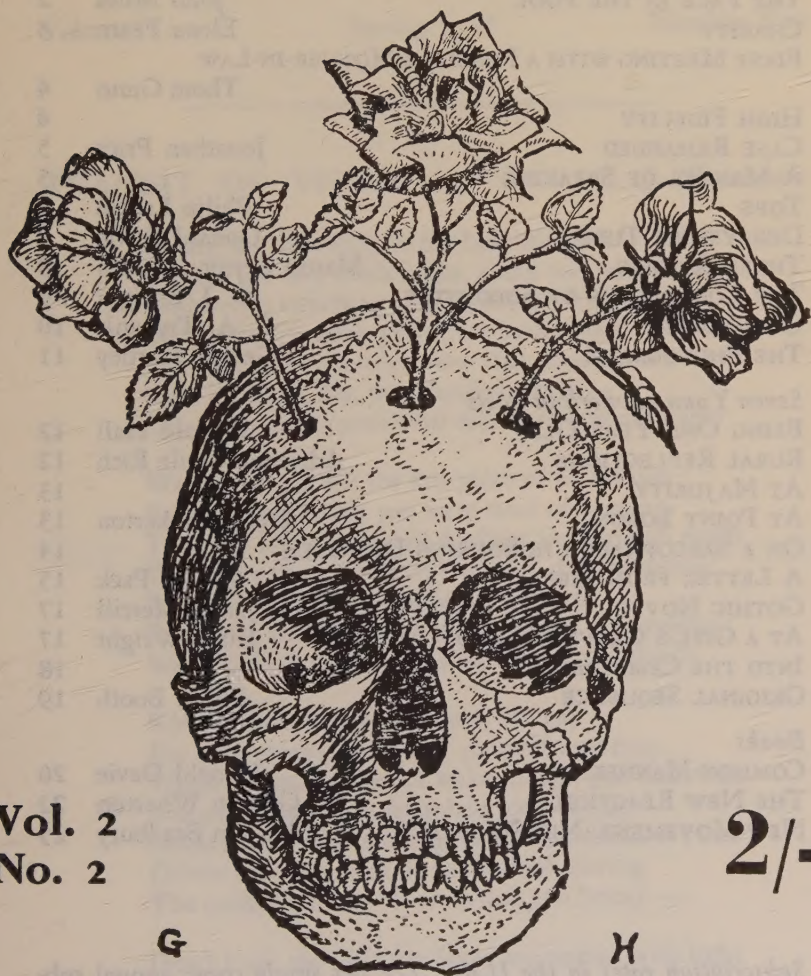


THE SCOTCH



Vol. 2
No. 2

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A REVIEW OF POETRY AND CRITICISM
EDITED BY GEORGE HARTLEY

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LISTEN

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TRANSIT OF VENUS

G. J. Warnock

Beauty, go cunningly in the helpless dark
Among the stiff black rocks, make soft your hands
Laid to this twitching skin of earth's disquiet.
Here even you must grope, for by no mark
Are your steps led down now that once ran riot
Over the high, flat, undefended sands —
Cry, from these caves what monsters may not bark?

Well have you left for this place of no friends
Familiar courts that you were tired of keeping.
The path from their dull daylight lies through perils
Worse for their oddness; the black dark portends
Risks of the uncontrollable, of quarrels
Pouncing, picked out of air — Venus, go creeping
Softly though smiling, caution guide your hands.

Kind in false valedictory care, but gay
For your escape, still think yourself unerring.
Think monsters may not wake though you walk near
Nor creaking rift in deep-laid rock display
Gross marks of wounding; think that dreamer's fear
Drives thus, no more, to ineffectual stirring
The outflung limbs of lands that you betray —

Don't look, the hills you leave are starred with light
And live with signals that report your going.
Each print and echo of your careful tread
Flares in your track — all this kept from your sight
In pure obedience; or for pride, half dead
Doubtless in all but this, to hide their knowing —
To keep that last bright crown from your delight.

DISPOSSESSED

G. J. Warnock

Leaves in the gutter, lamps at every window,
 Eyes under the lamps reading, alone;
 Thousands in layers, angled to fit the wandering
 River's aptness for bridging; a rich old town.

Prospered by savage trade; the Dresden manners
 Left once as an aspiration, half in jest,
 For decadent heirs in whose untroubled harbour
 Nothing has since looked mortal or like a risk.

Yet one complains; but waits; was made an alien
 Once and was robbed; he knows what they must learn.
 So with precision made a list of ruins
 Daily grow longer till the right should win.

Fires here and there, unaccountable deaths,
 Are interests for odd times; but most concerns him
 Watching, observed from windows, one bright hearth
 Where like a fuse his birthright burns.

THE FACE IN THE POOL

John Miles

Not features, the expression, is the face.
 Narcissus or the ape salutes his kind.
 Ancestral piety's a rude grimace
 When all you came for was to lean and find

What other selves as decent monsters rise
 Refractory but natural, once in air:
 This faun already crouched with mocking eyes
 Like mortals, knows the truth and doesn't care,

Though you can never fathom such a fear
 As trees divine by stillness must be his
 (As if one movement now would make too clear
 How brief an image of the face he is)

Nor ever find his brief identity
 In swinging rooms that hinge on you alone
 Passing your gesture to infinity:
 The sky darkens, and the face is gone.

CHARITY

Elena Fearn

A felon sees all felons
 Together in a cage,
 Their eyes not human but opaque
 With brutish rage.

For that he howls, is brutish too.
 In a dark glass then he stares
 And sees the mask. Mechanical
 The teeth he bares,

The fabulous machinery
 Of his brute engine racing on.
 And his human heart cries out :
 Such prison cannot be a home.

The untiring sea outside the bars
 Commands: This is your peace, to be
 The lover of my blackest child,
 Yourself. The air cries, See!

It is the sentence of the crime,
 Not too much to bear —
 Though from his unaccustomed lid
 Rolls a violent tear.

So it befalls this brute's eye
 Enlarges with surprise,
 In his own blue image finding
 Distance and long skies

And oceans in that mirror-look.
 And what he gazes on
 To be explored, although
 It yet has no horizon :

His human eye, whose fellows
 All desperately shine bright.
 Despair gave the animal
 Such peerless sight.

FIRST MEETING WITH A POSSIBLE MOTHER-IN-LAW

Thom Gunn

She thought, without the benefit of knowing,
You, who had been hers, were not any more.
We had locked our love in to leave nothing showing
From the room her handiwork had crammed before;
But — much revealing in its figured sewing —
A piece of stuff hung out, caught in the door.
I caused the same suspicion I watched growing:
Who could not tell what whole the part stood for?

There was small likeness between her and me:
Two strangers left upon a bare top landing,
I for a prudent while, she totally.

But, eyes turned from the bright material hint,
Each shared too long a second's understanding,
Learning the other's terms of banishment.

HIGH FIDELITY

Thom Gunn

I play your furies back to me at night,
The needle dances in the grooves they made,
For fury is passion like love, and fury's bite,
These grooves, no sooner than a love-mark fade;
Then all swings round to nightmare: from the rim,
To prove the guilt I don't admit by day,
I duck love as a witch to sink or swim
Till in the ringed and level I survey
The tuneless circles that succeed a voice.
They run, without distinction, passion, rage,
Around a soloist's merely printed name
That still turns, from the impetus not choice,
Surrounded in that played-out pose of age
By notes he was, but cannot be again.

CASE REMANDED**Jonathan Price**

Remanded for fresh evidence to be brought,
 Your case drags on, and never looks like ending.
 No hope of settling matters out of court,

Too many people are involved, defending
 Or accusing, mostly people that you know
 Or used to know, and each day they are sending

For further witnesses, whose faces show
 They recognise you, though you never saw
 Them in your life till now. The charges grow

More numerous, more confused, the points of law
 Harder to understand, the trial progressing
 Toward no summing-up; today brings more

Atrocities to light than bear confessing,
 Some that you know about, some you forget,
 All undeniable. No good expressing

Your sympathy to all concerned: regret,
 Though most sincere, can never touch their sorrow.

Sentence! you plead. Do you not know it yet?
 It is the trial, tomorrow and tomorrow.

A MANNER OF SPEAKING**Jonathan Price**

'Where are these poets' hearts?' a reader cries.
 Not withered, but not worn upon the sleeve
 Of singing robes. Some things they choose to leave
 To bards who wield their pens between their thighs.

Acknowledged legislators, too, you find
 Despairing over some poetic flower:
 'So-and-so should be writing at this hour,
 Mankind hath need of him'. He needs mankind:

When no great faith inspires a heaving breast
 Even hot air is too much to expect.
 Slogans deflated prompt the intellect
 To check for faults by probing all the rest.

To make all fair in love that's fair in war
 Detachment helps: as eyes grow dim and close
 At an embrace, so lovers' nearness throws
 Words out of focus. So with verse, but more.

Manner of speech depends in part on choice,
 In part on circumstance: when values quake —
 Black, white; right, wrong; on purpose; by mistake —
 One shuns the shouting, trusts the speaking voice.

Some compare notes with an old writer's ghost;
 But, by annihilating all that's made
 With echoes of a literary shade,
 Falsetto strains are all the song they boast.

Ventriloquism, like faked passion, shows.
 Prospectors stake, then dig beneath their claim
 To riches; which suggests the poet's aim
 In writing to discover what he knows.

TOPS

Philip Larkin

Tops heel and yaw,
 Sent newly spinning:
 Squirm round the floor
 At the beginning,
 Then draw gravely up
 Like candle-flames, till
 They are soundless, asleep,
 Moving, yet still.
 So they run on,
 Until, with a falter,
 A flicker — soon gone —
 Their pace starts to alter:
 Heeling again
 As if hopelessly tired
 They wobble, and then
 The poise we admired
 Reels, clatters and sprawls,
 Pathetically over.
 — And what most appals
 Is that first tiny shiver,
 That stumble, whereby
 We know beyond doubt
 They have almost run out
 And are starting to die.

DERBYSHIRE TURF

Donald Davie

That, true to the contours which round it
 Out and lie close,
 The best beauty is barbarous, grounded
 On foreign bodies,
 Flush to their angles, ungainly,
 Pawkily true —
 Derbyshire turf, you tried vainly
 To point such a moral
 When we, in our warmly remembered
 Youth, from the old
 Armstrong Siddeley tourer descended
 Shouting upon you.

Then as now it was just where the boulder
 Lay scantily buried
 Or the gritstone poked up a shoulder,
 You sported your streaks
 Of a specially sumptuous darkened
 Lush olive green —
 Yet in those days none of us hearkened
 To this intimation
 That where most intriguingly mounded,
 Abrupt in its curves,
 Beauty is richest and rounded
 Home on the truth.

Very well. Still, we should wonder
 At farmers who loaded
 Wagons with stones to lay under
 The grass of their pastures.
 Much the same is the poet who, prizing
 The shape of the truth,
 Studies to find some surprising
 Eccentric perception
 To validate memory. Boys
 Are willing to guess
 At the rock which lies under their joy's
 Elusiveness.

THREE SATIRES

Martin Seymour-Smith

1

Sinslug, an Evangelist

Sinslug, who reveals the ordinance we need
 To raise our living to the standard God's decreed,
 Damns most of all, licentiousness, and charges those
 With stupration, nothing less, who have for joy embraced
 (Compunctious his attempt to uproot envy's weed).
 He blabs, by his persistence, that he's not agreed
 With our censorious impression of his breed —
 A universal feeling, and doubtless in a taste
 As bad, and upon scrutiny as little based
 As more nice rumours: of *Sinslug's* impotence; his greed;
 Or that one of how a sinner he's blackmailing
 With hell-fire works night and day (and's starved for failing)
 Collating passages of pentateuchal prose
 The import of whose eschatology *Sinslug* knows
 Alone, but which (if finished) will provide the creed
 Whose righteousness, so far, mankind's so slow in hailing.

But does that sciolist realise how well he's placed?
 Better (he declaims, obtaining fame) to pray and plead
 (Like Christ) with our contempt, take no private heed,
 Than to confirm our unrepentance, and disclose
 Himself, as, say, he *is*. But this no more than shows
 That *Sinslug's* nature cannot ever be disgraced:
 For what creature could abuse his soul, who's faced
 With a Creation from which his own outlook's effaced
 Everything that's decent, honest, good, or chaste?

2

Queen Leer

Sado-pathic, thanks for drawing
 The madman out of me.
 Forgive me now that I am throwing
 You through sewers to the sea:
 Successful poultices grow more than grey
 When hoarded past their one half-day.

3

The Punishment

Of all men living, who could be most wise
 Insists that women may put out men's eyes;
 Yet is himself protected from his ban
 On love without obedience: he can
 Inform the world that he's contented now
 In a serene potency, and broadcast how
 He lives happy in a woman's grip
 Ignorant he holds the hand that holds the whip
 Whose punishments therefore produce
 Routine reports, no more, in Love's Official News.

Has cold theory caught this rebel up at last?
 Are his days of fruitfulness all past
 Now he guides her by whom he says he's led?
 Or (though he's not yet blinded, sacrificed or dead)
 May not she (in fact) have sprung the last surprise,
 Already used her cruelty (not his to subsidise)
 To cut him, just a little, down to size,
 By simply closing up, not putting out, his eyes?

Yet he's so restless on his tranquil rack
 How harsh are we who wish such torments back
 As would once more his whole frame wrench and crack?

THE CONSPECTUS OF SODOMITES

D. J. Enright

After yet another cocktail party,
 having drunk too much, out of goodwill,
 And afterwards drunk more, out of ill —

Coming round with a hangover, on a hot airless
 day, sweating stale alcohol, and moving
 Like one who moves against a moving staircase —

Good for nothing, indeed; not even
 a smoke, till my dim eye fell on the title of
 A Japanese story. *The Conspectus of Sodomites* (1687).

Not precisely my party, either. But I can see
 the wicked old scribbler
 With his avid fingers, raking in every cranny

Of the green-room, bearing away his sacks of grist
 from Osaka counting-houses and Kyoto brothels.
 Nimble, ardent, inquiring, he passed for a 'realist'.

Love of humanity can take *that* form, it's true.

The only writer at last night's do
 Was the social reporter. 'Who are the big names here?'

— A more genuine realist. Alas, that
 'Miss Moll Flanders and Miss Child-of-Autumn
 Were unable to be present'. My respects, Saikaku San —

Your titles alone are better than a tube of aspirin,
 your sad and naughty persons quite accountable.
 Thanks to you, I stand on fairly solid ground again.

CATACOMBS

C. A. Trypanis

Eros and Psyche here? The pagan myth of love?
 (Can pagan love be then as pure, as deep
 As the Christian?) and close above
 Good Shepherd Orpheus singing to his sheep?

Beside stern Moses flies the coy
 Imp of love, mocking with bud-curved
 Wings (because Eros was born to destroy
 Has he slipped into the Christian underworld?)

And through the plaster gapes a tragic mask
 (Is Christian death the last act of the play?)
 And the Seasons carrying basket and flask
 Release doves (the souls?) that float away

To an Augustan pastoral, where a stream
 Trickles by dusty trees — a poor device
 For 'The Garden of the Head Supreme,
 The ambrosial fruitage and the dews of Paradise'.

And Christ, and the Disciples, and unfurled
 Sails encircle Ocean, whose rough beard drips
 Fish! This is the last smile of the ancient world
 That parting curled the earnest Christian lips.

THE PHOTOGRAPHER

George Hartley

Taking aim he posed no smiling question;
The object of this study would not die
Or watch instead, with smiles, the usual bird
But made his point of view an indiscretion

Without recourse to any awkward word,
Just simply with a movement of the eye
And willed no obvious smile to photographs,
That would not always seem sincere, compared

Against a true emotion, but would buy
A double-exposure in the darkroom,
Of the observer and observed; perhaps?
For later on this problem would defy

Correct development in the gloom.
He had to see the light as red, that helps
To place the image truly in the dark,
Prey to negative-inversion, too soon

To turn the vision inside-out and work
A switch from right, to what's left unshaken
By news of the posers altered hopes,
That the camera would lie, the lens fake.

Exposures were retouched, her prints taken.

Seven Young American Poets

BEING ONE YEAR OLD

Donald Hall

The careful finger hesitates between
The wrapping paper and the cart of blocks.
Each choice is serious: what does it mean
To hug the rabbit and to eat his box?

The toaster pops. Outside, the birds begin.
A bright new object marks the kitchen floor,
But sunlight will not taste. The senses win
An index of the world in metaphor.

The head is poised in earnest, and it learns
The mixture and confusion of events,
From which the mind by growth and study earns
Predictability as consequence.

RURAL REFLECTIONS

Adrienne Cecile Rich

This is the grass your feet are planted on.
You paint it orange or you sing it green,
But you have never found
A way to make the grass mean what you mean.

A cloud can be whatever you intend:
Ostrich or leaning tower or staring eye.
But you have never found
A cloud sufficient to express the sky.

Get out there with your splendid expertise;
Raymond who cuts the meadow does no less.
Inhuman nature says:
Inhuman patience is the true success.

Human impatience trips you as you run;
Stand still and you must lie.
It is the grass that cuts the mower down;
It is the cloud that swallows up the sky.

AT MAJORITY

Adrienne Cecile Rich

When you are old and beautiful,
 And things most difficult are done,
 There will be few who can recall
 Your face as it is ravaged now
 By youth and its oppressive choice.

Your look will hold their wondering looks
 Grave as Cordelia's at the last, —
 Neither with rancor at the past,
 Nor to upbraid the coming time;
 For you will be at peace with time.

But now, a daily warfare takes
 Its toll of tenderness in you,
 And you must live like captains who
 Wait out the hour before the charge —
 Fearful, and yet impatient too.

Yet someday this will have an end —
 All choices made or choice resigned —
 And in your face the literal eye
 Trace little of your history
 Nor ever piece the tale entire

Of villages that had to burn
 And playthings of the will destroyed
 Before you could be safe from time
 And gather in your brow and air
 The stillness of antiquity.

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AT POINT LOBOS

Helen Pinkerton

A meadow of wildgrass, heather and sage
 Lies here amid the promontory hills
 Out of the view of either white-rimmed bay
 Whose indentation marks the coastal sills.
 Water that lay below the winds' upheaval
 Moves through the turbulence of reef and spray
 To calm again — clouding above the cypress.
 This scene is fixed within the tranquil day

And is held firm without my mind, while I
 Remember a high plain, barren of trees,
 A granite-sanded butte, immersed in sage,
 A pitted hill of copper, manganese,
 Silver and quartz, or porphyry and gold,
 A gutted hill that poured a copper creek
 Steaming into the thin, supernal air,
 Bearing as dross what later men will seek.

It is as if this time were that again,
 Found in the scent of sage so perfectly
 It is held whole within the mind this once
 United to myself, and I left free;
 For memory that carried too much pain
 For men destroyed by earth, then buried there,
 Would not appear nor yet be exorcised
 But altered sense, as ghosts have altered air.

And as the face obscure and incomplete
 Which love, deprived, creates when it must change,
 That time survived, unknown, in other times
 And was perceived in innocence as strange,
 Till other change, willed or induced by age,
 Delivered feeling from servility,
 Revealed and yet assuaged the pain of loss,
 Letting the lost appear as it must be.

ON A SARCOPHAGUS HONOURING DIONYSUS

Helen Pinkerton

Fauns gather, grapes are flung from the loose fingers,
 The maenads dance a circle never closed
 And never ceasing. Cupid, catlike, brushes
 Silenus' leg or strips the heavy vine.
 The women greet with low, inhuman cries
 New priestesses and him, the son, who dies
 In celebration of the dance and wine.

As mountain water over stones and pebbles
 Softens their edges where the ripples swerve,
 The chitons flowing on the quickened flesh
 Mould smoother breasts and hips of deeper curve.
 The naked forms of calf and thigh dissolve
 Into convulsing cloth, as they revolve,
 Vanish in moil, as love in sensual nerve.

So love becomes what Dionysus is,
 The murderous gesture that he liberates.
 For passion fears an unexpected loss
 And, to show power, destroys what it creates.
 Impassive time, that gives, should take away,
 But woman's fear anticipates the day,
 Converting all her loves to brutal hates.

Mad Agave seems not to know the beast
 Is Pentheus, thinks that for the god's delight
 She and her sisters rend a worthy prey,
 Perhaps the god, incarnate in his rite.
 They are the beasts, deceived, under his sway.
 Agave, Ino, and Autonoe,
 Sorrowing after, supplicate his might.

A LETTER FROM HELL

Robert Pack

Dear friend, there are no lakes of fire here,
 No chains of ice, no boulders to be pushed
 Up mountainsides, but fiends run through my mind
 Naked, distorting sleep. And when I'm flushed
 With dreams of you as we in harvest pluck
 Red apples in a holiday of snow,
 I fall to wake so sorrowfully wise,
 For by the vividness of loss we know
 The place we've left, the truth of words we've said,
 And mourn the richness of mahogany
 That framed the steaming meat, the heart-felt bread.
 The plum, once tasted, waters in my mouth,
 And in my cheek with an autumnal sound
 The plum-pit softly sings a dying round;
 Dying, not death, defines our punishment,
 And change is all the sorrow we can know,
 And home the place from where we always go.

My torture is the fare-well wail of wind;
 This summer's butterfly is not the same —
 The likeness pains — I am not fooled, but I
 Pretend and call it still by last year's name.
 A rude rush gathers in the streets I walk,
 And moving with the crowd I know a dread
 Of oceans sounding sibilants like talk.
 Plaster crumbles in houses of the poor,

Beneath the floor the rat grows plump, and children
 Feel his gnawing at their bones. The rich
 Are stiff but tired, and push away their food,
 No sensual consolation does them good,
 While we whose pride is in our libraries
 Will study late to cram a prisoned head,
 And lie about the books we have not read.
 But sometimes in the pauses of the dark,
 Or in the woods between the thrush's song
 And blue-jay's cry, it seems that I belong
 Beyond myself, I feel within the air
 The thunder's pulse, a breathing everywhere,
 And then my lips go dumb, my doubt is shame,
 And still beyond myself, beyond my fear,
 I sense that there is something holy here.

Of course this passes, I turn to what I know,
 The girls, I love them all, anonymous
 In loveliness; what else is there to do?
 And when the moon is frozen in my eye
 I touch them with a meaning that is true.
 But there is not a thing that they can keep;
 What can they want of me? I only leave them
 In the flesh, and yet they weep, they weep.
 And I have seen upon the softest bed
 Their hair turned rough as grass, their look
 Dissolved into a slime, their aching arms
 A skeleton to hug a stone. What god
 Shaped ancient nothingness into these scenes?
 If you can hear, my friend, speak out the truth,
 Reveal the end of evil through the means!

I write these words out for myself, dear friend,
 For you are gone into a foreign weather,
 And find I feel no loss despite this end;
 It is enough we met and talked together.
 It is enough you stirred me into song
 And cheered me when the black rains broke behind me,
 And made me sad when sunshine strode too long —
 Reminded of the browning leaves before me.
 Now you are gone into a foreign weather
 And leave me with a sadness of my own
 I could not share were we again together;
 It is enough I find that I have grown.
 I write these words out for myself, dear friend,
 Heaven will not begin when hell will end.

GOTHIC NOVEL

James Merrill

How rich in opportunity! Part of a wall
 Gave back a hollow sound. Forthwith, intrigued,
 The Contessina knew her mind, consulted
 No one. A door! Annunziata darkly
 Swept up after the workmen and withdrew.
 Lost in thought, her mistress was already
 Rehearsing what to say in thirty years :
 ' Only after our marriage did I begin
 To fear your father ' — but she broke off
 And went with a candle down the dank stair
 Leading she knew not where. What sweet alarms
 Had gone unfelt for lack of this provocative
 Circumstance! There gathered about her brow
 Tenuous webs of not quite human weaving.
 What though the passage led but to the chapel?
 Might not her adventure, rightly told, set him
 To brooding on a crime? might she not still
 Reproachfully die in childbirth, or be undone
 By the major-domo who had held his tongue?
 Infant alternatives to the workaday,
 These musings led her on, which ever after
 (The door by that time sealed afresh in fright)
 Will seek her out, handsome, unscrupulous,
 Quick to extort costly precautions, turn
 Her forelock white, a matron suddenly —
 Become, in short, a life, a trodden path.
 Dazzle of choice, anon there shall be none :
 The candle gutters at a breath, her own.
 Put down the book unread. The tale is done.

AT A GIRL'S GRAVE IN OHIO James Wright

Fathers of moonlight, now must I begin
 To spend this dark in mourning for a whore?
 No one will hear her retching any more.
 She lies beneath the surface, hardly grey.
 Dry as a burdock, the city blows away
 Out of my mind, because it was so long
 Ago I found her blundering among
 The houses near the river, drunk and blind.

Slowly the laughter down her stairway thinned.
 As when the moon, that chicken-hawk in flight,
 Suddenly sears against the sick and white
 Face of a thief before a headlight beam,
 My memory roots me out of the mirror where
 I caught my eyes fleeing her in the glare
 Of neons. The memory of her terror fades
 To indistinguishable window shades,
 Doorway and alley and a hiding dog.

Tall shadows kneeling on the barren fog
 Of towns and rivers, why should I recall
 Anything of the body, or her call
 Across the alley, spelling out my name?
 Ten years ago I wondered why I came,
 A pale rat rummaging in hell for love,
 Rolled for a dollar, banished with a shove
 To Twenty-third and Water Streets beside
 The vinegar works where ugly women died,
 Where lovers wrestled with a cold desire
 Or cried out in the doorways of the fire.

INTO THE CEMETERY

I came upon my meadow sweet
 With folded grass and heavy vines.
 The grapes were dropping on my feet,
 The apples hung in juicy lines;
 And that was paradise enough
 To keep the prying devil off.
 But underneath the apple shade
 A silly scrawny kitten slept;
 I saw the gartersnake that crept
 Into her throat and stung her dead.

And down behind the barn the sun
 Was slackening its yellow fold,
 And I walked there to lie as one
 Relieved to find the summer cold;
 And that was paradise enough
 To keep the prying devil off.
 But under leaning beams a dog
 I knew had jollied in the mud,
 Was down and squirming in the mud,
 His foreleg eaten by a hog.

And so I turned to find that place
 Where sows and serpents lie asleep,
 Where killed and killer face to face
 Are folded down in dark so deep
 That it is paradise enough
 To keep the prying devil off.
 My fist against the gateway rang,
 And I went in, to find the rock
 Assuming shapes of pig and snake
 With muddy snout and granite fang.

ORIGINAL SEQUENCE

Philip Booth

Time was the apple Adam ate.
 Eve bit, gave seconds to his mouth,
 and then they had no minute left
 to lose. Eyes opened in mid-kiss,
 they saw for once, raw nakedness,
 and hid that sudden consequence
 behind an hour's stripped leaves.

This is one sequence in the plot,
 the garden where God came, that time,
 to call. Hands behind him, walking
 to and fro, he counted how
 the fruit fell, bruised on frozen sod.
 This was his orchard, his to pace;
 the day was cool, and he was God.

Old Adam heard him humming, talking
 to himself: *Winesap, King,*
 ripen in sun,
 MacIntosh and
 Northern Spy
 fall one by one,
 ripen to die.

Adam heard him call his name,
 but Adam, no old philosopher,
 was not sure what he was after.
We're naked, Lord, and can't come out.
 Eve nudged him with the bitten fruit.

God paused. *How do you know? Where is
that woman that I sprung from you?*

Eve held the twisted stem, the pulp;
she heard the low snake hiss, and let fly
blindly with a woman arm, careless
where her new-won anger struck.
The fodder for that two-fold flock
fell, an old brown core, at God's
stopped feet. He reached, and wound the clock.

COMMON-MANNERISM

Collected Poems, Randall Jarrell. (Faber, 15/-.)

Bread rather than Blossoms, D. J. Enright. (Secker and Warburg, 10/6.)

JARRELL's case is very like that of the early Wordsworth. For instance, his 'The Night before the Night before Christmas' is a dramatic monologue open to the same surely conclusive objections as those Coleridge and Jeffrey brought against Wordsworth's 'The Thorn' (cf. Jarrell's explanatory preface to his poem with Wordsworth's to his). The objection is that by being dramatic monologues written so whole-heartedly 'in character', both Jarrell's poem and Wordsworth's depend for their interest upon the extent to which the imagined character and the imagined situation of that character can be universalised. Wordsworth's imagined persona is too idiosyncratic, and the situation in which Jarrell places his persona is too special, for either poem to have the sort of general relevance that one asks of art. Jarrell's poem is about pain and loss first as recognised by the child, then as accommodated never with complete success into the psyche of the grown-up; and this is certainly a theme of general interest. But its interest is severely narrowed when the protagonist is made a person of a very special type in an intellectual situation possible or general, even to persons of that type, only at the precise date Jarrell specifies, 1934.

A much more exact and obvious analogy is between Jarrell's 'The Black Swan' and Wordsworth's 'We are Seven'. But here the comparison works all in Wordsworth's favour — not only because his poem is self-explanatory where Jarrell's is impenetrable except by reference to his explanatory note; but because Wordsworth's poem can yield a general law of child-psychology (that the child's psyche refuses to accept the fact of death), whereas Jarrell's presents only one child's specific way of evading the fact of death through fantasy.

Jarrell's poems of this kind seem to invite the same sort of interest as extracts from a psycho-analyst's case-book; Wordsworth's 'Lyrical

Ballads', though they contain material rather like this (e.g., 'The Thorn'), yet as a whole provide the higher because more universal interest of the systematic theory of child-psychology written by such a psychologist, drawing upon his case-book but generalising from the particulars there noted. And there is the further difference that Wordsworth's poems have the excitement and conviction of personally-intuited entirely novel discoveries, where Jarrell's too often are just particular illustrations of discoveries made by Freud or hypotheses made by Jung.

Sister Bernetta Quin, for whom Jarrell is 'perhaps the most likely candidate among younger writers for a permanent place in American letters' (*The Metamorphic Tradition in Modern Poetry* p. 168), insists that the Jungian collective unconscious is only a hypothesis, but when she goes on to elucidate Jarrell's Jungian attitude to dreams and folklore she does not pause to wonder what difference it makes to our valuation of Jarrell's poems if we find ourselves out of sympathy with their Jungian basis. So far as I can see, it makes more difference than it should if Jarrell's poetry were properly achieved art.

Jarrell in fact (and this again is Wordsworthian), while asking an act of faith in psychological hypotheses, himself is incapable of an act of faith in poetic as distinct from factual truth, in the validity of the poem as artifact rather than document. His poems make their claims on our attention too exclusively on the basis of the supposedly intrinsic importance of the raw materials they are made from; hardly at all on the basis of the *making*, the artificer's manipulating and organising of his materials. And in fact such manipulation and organisation has apparently been reduced to a minimum, or else exerted to the paradoxical end of giving that impression. In the latter case, if this is a question of the art that conceals art, it is only too successful. The poems look only too spontaneous and formless, being innocent — not only of discursive logic (this was inevitable, given the nature of the chosen material) — but also of all the traditional disciplines, rhyming, rhythmical, and (for the most part) stanzaic. This unlicked nakedness is particularly apparent in what is to the English reader Jarrell's best-known work, though it is certainly not his best; I mean, his war-poems such as the much-anthologised 'Death of the Ball-turret Gunner'. (Three better poems are 'The Knight, Death, and the Devil', 'A Sick Child', and 'The Marchen'.)

All this is to put the best face on the matter. One could instead remember Jarrell's cheerful and ingratiating criticism; and think of his respect for 'fact' and disrespect for art as simply philistine. Perhaps he is just trying to be the poet of the common man.

This brings me to the other book under review. For the most disconcerting thing about D. J. Enright's second collection is what I privately think of as 'common-mannerism'. This has always been an element in the make-up of 'The Movement', though up to now it's been apparent chiefly in criticism, notably in some of the pronouncements of Mr. Amis. Here it shows up in poetry, where it seems to me a very ugly phenomenon. Enright when he wrote these poems was lecturing on English in a Japanese university; and yet poem after poem follows the same pattern, elevating

a structure of references to traditional culture, Oriental or European or both, only to tear it down again with snarls of disgust. To be sure the poet juxtaposes his cultural references with images of the squalor and physical destitution of contemporary Japanese life, and would have us believe — what in a few cases we *can* believe — that his revulsion against the culture came from his feeling that, for all its riches, it had nothing to say to the down-and-out Geisha-girl or the peasant in the paddy-field. All the same, there seems to be a genuine danger that impatience with cultural pretentiousness is turning into impatience with culture; and that humane indignation is dissolving into a ready-made sentimentality. The book has been duly applauded by the reviewers for its 'humanity'.

There is a sort of perverse heroism about Jarrell's endeavours. But if we cannot withhold a kind of admiration for a wrong-headedness so thorough, this also means that his case seems incurable where Enright's doesn't. It's not just that Jarrell's book represents the author's selection from no less than four previous volumes, where Enright's is by comparison only an interim report. It should also be noted that *Bread rather than Blossoms*, though it contains sixty pieces, is really a very light-weight volume, consisting for the most part of what may be called verse-journalism. Like some of the collections of MacNeice it asks to be read only at that level, and this blunts the edge of the criticism I've levelled at it. What's more, it profits by being keyed so low and asking to be taken so casually; it can be read through at a sitting without strain yet without giving too much away. One laughs outright time and again, notes the clever wisecracks for subsequent use at sherry-parties, and turns the page eagerly for the next piece of calculated impudence. I agree with those admirers of MacNeice who argue that it's a good thing when poetry can do this. And personally I get more pleasure when Enright does it than when MacNeice does it, because Enright always remembers — as MacNeice often doesn't, and of course as Jarrell doesn't want to — that the poem is an artifact, not just a sample section of animated conversation. All the same I cling to the hope that Enright has been composing poems more ambitious and deliberate than any here; and that he's not so out of patience with artiness and cultural window-dressing that he's forsworn for good the deeper reaches (and so the deeper humanity) of the art he practises.

Donald Davie

THE NEW REACTION

New Lines, edited by Robert Conquest. (Macmillan, 12/6.)
Poets of the 1950s, edited by D. J. Enright. (Kenkyusha, Tokyo, Yen 150.)

THESE two anthologies cover roughly the same ground; Mr Conquest's *New Lines* contains poems by Miss Elizabeth Jennings, Messrs Amis, Davie, Enright, Gunn, Holloway, Larkin, Wain and the editor himself.

With the exception of Mr Gunn, *Poets of the 1950s* has the same contributors; so there is a case for lumping the books together and talking about 'the kind of poetry' produced by these writers, all of whom have been, at one time or another, identified with what is called 'The Movement'. Unfortunately (not for the poets concerned, but for the review I am supposed to be writing) neither 'The Movement' nor the 'kind' of poetry it collectively produces is capable of positive definition — both Mr Conquest and Mr Enright more or less admit that. It is, according to Mr Conquest, 'little more than a negative determination to avoid bad principles' that his contributors have in common. Except possibly as a shorthand term of reference for literary journalists, then, that rather disposes of 'The Movement' as such, and these books have to stand or fall on the point of whether or not this 'negative determination' results in a healthy reaction against certain 'kinds' of poetry which up to now have been considered acceptable. And, since hygiene isn't everything, the poems of the contributors ought to show some positive signs of being good in themselves.

So perhaps Mr Conquest's statement about the common determination to avoid bad principles' is the best way into the question. As it stands, though, his modest claim looks a little ingenuous: it provided Mr Stephen Spender (in his *New Statesman* review of *New Lines*) with material for his perfectly justified remark that 'bad principles' are precisely what every poet tries to avoid. We might say that some try harder than others, and that it depends what you mean by 'bad', still it is true that had Mr Conquest condensed his claim rather less he would be on firmer ground. From the evidence of the poems here, the introductions to both books, and the brief statements of the poets that are included in Mr Enright's anthology, I gather that those 'bad principles' Mr Conquest is talking about are pretty certainly among the things that Mr Spender might call good. In other words, they are the more ostentatious mannerisms of the 'thirties and 'forties that gained such a degree of acceptance from readers of poetry that they came to be considered as a new set of permissible 'poeticisms'; pylons being a sort of progressive substitute for blushing roses. Personally I find even pylons preferable to the fulsome lasciviousness of Mr George Barker, say, in his more heated moments:

Horror of abhorrent presence, depart
Down that appalling alley whence
Gathering labyrinthine character from kind
You came. Forget to remember the ardour of our meeting
As with passionate fear I clasped your animal head
And hid my knees in the flowers of your bowels.

Of course, not all the poets of the last thirty years have been of *that* stamp; but in particular the hubbub kicked up by Mr Barker and his apocalyptic *confreres* has had a way of echoing down the 'appalling alley' of time with such volume and atavistic compulsion that you still often find it mistaken for the Music of the Spheres. And it is certainly true that when most of the poets in these anthologies were starting to write

this sort of thing was an open sesame to the halls of fame so far as the editors of *Poetry London* were concerned :

Brought in a bowl of flaming crocuses
In an ebon mirrorless age,
Let fall to her face
Till her cheeks lit in tongues.
Who would laugh and call Zello,
See how scorched is the boy,
Who would laugh at the arrow
I should plunge in her eye.

Keeping that kind of thing in mind (and you only have to get hold of some old numbers of *Poetry Quarterly*, *New Road* or the anthologies of *The New Apocalypse* to see how widespread it was not so long ago) it appears that this 'negative determination to avoid bad principles' is not such a bad thing. It now remains to be seen if the positive side of this reaction is any good in its own right. For a start I must admit that I think the poets in these anthologies do occasionally throw out the baby with the bath-water. That is to say, in order to avoid meaningless verbosity of this order —

... being miserable for myself I began
And now am miserable for the mass of man.

— these poets are sometimes so restrained that not much is said at all. That is not a frequent occurrence; what happens more often is perhaps best illustrated by Mr Enright's less good poems where we are presented with a miniature (done from the life it is true), and when at the bottom of it we find a generalising punch-line, the rest of the poem seems too frail to support it. The reason for that seems to me to be a matter of over-particularisation, or possibly forcing private and particular observation into public and general form, which is what, I think, very often happens with Dr Davie's poems. To some extent, though, I think there is not a poet here who does not suffer from this failing.

With particular poems it is a different matter. Such lines as these by Mr Amis seem to me to achieve a perfect balance between the private experience and public speech :

Perhaps it is not too late to crane the eye
And find you, distant and small, but as you are;
If not, I will retain you honestly blurred,
Not a bland refraction of sweet mirrors.

And so, for that matter, do these by Mr Wain from his very fine love-poem *Riddle for a Christmas Cracker* :

Its slime the vapoured dew, its worst the best,
Its sickness health, its depths the clearest sky :
What is it? Ah, you never would have guessed :

Yet she towards whom (though far) I softly cry
 When asked, immediately would find it out,
 Swiftly as white intuitive pigeons fly.

One general observation that can validly be made about the work of these poets is that it is on a small scale; I do not think that is a fact which calls for excuses to be made because, if you like, their rule is not 'greatness of aim' but 'accuracy of aim'. Frankly, I find this very encouraging; it suggests anyway that they are learning their job. And if their failures are often connected with an over-cautious approach, then their successes are all the more solid because of it. So I will make no bones about recommending these anthologies — both if you can get them — because if the use of that old chestnut about a 'growing point' of future poetry was ever justified it is here.

Gordon Wharton

NEW MOVEMENT, NEW WORLD

A Word Carved on a Sill, John Wain. (Routledge, 10/6.)
The Faber Book of Modern American Verse, edited by W. H. Auden. (Faber, 21/-.)

'It looks as though he will eventually become our next Edmund Wilson.' In these generous terms *Essays in Criticism* introduces Mr John Wain to its American readers. Is it possible that, already, the new establishment in criticism (and in verse, and the novel) has arrived? Edmund Wilson, it will be remembered, was one of those who brought about the critical emancipation in America in the 'twenties and 'thirties; he was, moreover, a first-rate populariser of literary ideas. As a poet, one would estimate him less generously; his talents are pleasing but minor (see his poem, *On Editing Scott Fitzgerald's Papers*, in the Auden anthology). And Mr Wain? Well, in my view Mr Wain's real worth in all this new movement hooaha has been shown in his performance in *criticism*, in his skill in popularising and presenting the larger terms that lie behind whatever it is that is coming out of the 'fifties. The revolution in criticism was never quite accomplished in England, as it was in America; now, almost unnoticed, it has happened, and we have the conditions in which verse like Mr Wain's can be acclaimed. Like the verse of the Imagist movement, much of the 'new movement' verse has been interesting chiefly as a reinforcement of critical principles; it was when Pound and Eliot achieved a mature application of the theory and practice of the Imagists that *that* movement showed its real worth. I do think that, so far, the most fruitful consequences of the newer formulations are to be found in the work of those who have formulated them; but I think the real fruits haven't grown. In a letter to *The London Magazine*, where the plot is currently unfolding, the scrutiny still going on, D. J. Enright puts the point: 'the new sensibility that will organise old feelings and what is new

and peculiar to the present into a harmonious whole, with its own structural consequences, has still to emerge

The opportunity to read a collection of Mr Wain's poems is one we've wanted; poems collected together reinforce and reinterpret one another in a way that individual readings, however careful, cannot do. And the new sensation one emerges with is that, while retaining all the memories of being so pleased with this verse, one is somewhat less happy about it overall; one sees a lack of width, of enough variety of modes of articulation. The objection is a grand one, as applicable to Messrs Amis or Wain or Davie, in its different ways. One is still excited, in this new volume, by the poems that came out first, and drew one's attention to Mr Wain as poet a few years ago; *Eighth Type of Ambiguity* and *On the Publication of Boswell's Journal* still please. But the procedure becomes ritual; what is here a seriously witty proposition being developed with great technical and intellectual control is later a poetic exercise, shaped by a notion of irony, or wit, or ambiguity, which disciplines the materials. For that reason the more recent and much admired *Poem Feigned to Have Been Written by an Electronic Brain* seems to me an exercise in staginess akin to that evinced by lyric writers in intimate revues, or by writers like Ogden Nash, Dorothy Parker, or Don Maquis, whose slender credentials are, unhappily, passed by Mr Auden. Wit in the metaphysical sense of images yoked by violence together becomes, via the epigram, the joke. One suspects that Mr Wain, lacking a view of life sufficiently corrugated, uses technical substitutes; his technical skill is oddly in advance of what he has to communicate — that Christmas is a symbol of the modern desire to have something for nothing, that G-O-D is just, at bottom, a word. And — this is the point one is concerned by most — he has the technical apparatus of a modern, the sophistication of a poet at the end of the tradition, learning things from Eliot and Auden and Pound, without communicating sensations or attitudes that are in any serious sense modern or perceptions that are new. That is, he writes what is pretty much 'occasional verse'.

When one sees his verse in relation to a poetic scene that is of greater vigour and imaginative energy than ours is at present, the point becomes clearer. The American poetic scene has for some time been so much richer in width of prospect, expansiveness and variety of concern; by comparison Mr Wain, while he stands up well as far as technical skill is concerned, seems to lack stamina in his poetic communication about life. And is there, indeed, any sense in which he has technically or philosophically advanced beyond John Crowe Ransom, or Wallace Stevens? Or even Merrill Moore, who has written hundreds of thousands of short poems — he calls them 'sonnets' — which he has stored in his sonnetarium, a separate house in the grounds of his Quincy (Boston) home, and many of which he composes into a tape recorder while driving his car. Avowedly occasional, then, as *his* poems are, they have much the same technical resources as Mr Wain's; read his *He Said the Facts* —

'That is important. I do not watch the birds:
Spinsters do that; I do not count the swords:

Supply sergeants do that; nor list the words :
I leave that to the effing Ph.D.s.'

He said : ' All that I do I seek the facts;
The only things that concern me are the acts.'

When one comes on to John Crowe Ransom, whose 'witty' style is enriched by a humanist's perception of actualities, the warms and the colds, of the mortal lot, one sees how these poems could very well be being written by some new movement Englishman today, save that no one is writing as well as this. How beautifully poised and shaped the poems are; read *The Equilibrists* (which, alas, Mr Auden doesn't give) or (to pick one which he does give) *Bells for John Whiteside's Daughter*. Meta-physical vigour in a more abstruse sense lies in verse like that of Wallace Stevens, who thinks poetically in a sphere where his images reverberate and magnify; there are, indeed, thirteen ways of looking at a blackbird. Yet all these poems have been written anything up to thirty years ago. They are pleasantly assimilated by the younger poets; John Berryman's magnificent *Homage to Mistress Bradstreet*, which Mr Auden gives us all too small a taste of, has learned the Ransom lesson — 'Out of maize and air / your body's made, and moves' — but he bites into a whole world of Puritan *émigré* emotion besides. Naturally enough, the later poets suffer from a proliferation of influences and from an overall similarity of style; this is the consequence inherent in being at the end of an active poetic era; our imaginations are not far enough away from Eliot's or Auden's to offer the prospect of anything else. But Anthony Hecht, who in manner resembles a hundred of his fellow young poets contributing to the intellectual quarterlies, has, like Berryman, the imaginative stamina to stand out. Like Mr Wain, he writes on the toothache, but his joke is a philosopher's joke (*The Place of Pain in the Universe*):

An old engraving pictures St Jerome
Studying at his table, where a skull,
Crowned with a candle, streams cold tears of wax
On its bone features for the flesh it lacks,
Yet its white complement of teeth is full
While all the pain runs happily to loam.

Observe, goes on Mr Hecht, there is no easy moral here. Nor is there in other good younger poets like Richard Wilbur and Robert Lowell (Mr Auden unhappily includes no one born after 1923); Lowell's *Falling Asleep over the Aeneid* is derivative in the American way, the way that bores one when reading the poetry-publishing quarterlies, but he does master it by strength of thought and articulation. In his introduction, Mr Auden not surprisingly perplexes himself with the difference between English and American poets; he discerns a difference in pace and pitch (which he exaggerates and simplifies; and the point is less true than it was) and he suggests that English poets (particularly Oxford ones), unlike Americans, write 'for fun'. I can't see how the consequences of this approach can, in the end, be desirable; one of the strengths of the

American poetic scene is the way in which poets think their ideas through seriously. He also quotes De Tocqueville's prophecy that poets living in democratic times 'will prefer the delineation of passions and ideas to that of persons and achievements'; it is a comment particularly fitting to the present concerns of American poetry.

Well now, how well does Mr Auden's anthology point up the excellences I've claimed for the American poetic scene? It compares favourably with Geoffrey Moore's excellent *Penguin Book of Modern American Verse* in everything except price and representation of the young; its particular virtue is in its inclusion of longer poems by major poets, and in pursuit of this I wish that many fruitless bypaths had been ignored. But Robert Frost, E. E. Cummings, Vachel Lindsay and Robinson Jeffers all come out well, and one is reminded of the excellencies of Edna St Vincent Millay. And for a *Faber Book* there are some unfortunate errors (John Gould Fletcher died in 1950, not in 1946, and Stephen Vincent Benet was born in 1898) and affectations (the customary spelling is Richard Eberhart, not Eberhardt; Yvor, not Ivor, Winters; John Crowe Ransom, not — as in one place — Ranson). But if anthologies have any use, it is to send readers to collections of the individual poets, and (since American books are easily accessible here now) one hopes that the discoveries made by American poets in our time will be shared by English poets whose problems are not dissimilar. The gains made by English poets like Mr Wain may very well be best entrenched from this source.

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